



## AF Hartford Board Meeting Minutes

5/21/2025 5:30 PM EDT

Virtual via Zoom: <https://achievementfirst.zoom.us/j/82195140719>

### Attendance

**Members:** Victor De La Paz, Francoise Deristel-Leger, Surbhi Patel, Charon Smalls, Alice Turner

**Guests:** Leonard Epps

AF Staff: Omar Mayyasi, Emma White, Michael Rabin, Shannon Miller

#### I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:49 PM by Board Chair Erwin Hurst, Sr., once quorum was established.

#### II. Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

#### III. Board Resolutions and Approvals

Chair Erwin Hurst, Sr. welcomed the board and introduced Leonard Epps as a prospective board member. Mr. Epps, a former Hartford educator and current president of the Brother Carl Hardrick Institute for Violence Prevention and Community Engagement, shared his background and interest in continuing to serve the Hartford community through board participation.

Mr. Hurst, Sr. introduced the consent agenda with resolutions to approve the previous meeting minutes, Mr. Epps appointment to the AF Hartford board, Interim Principals and renewal of the Jumoke Joint HS Agreement. Victor De La Paz motioned, Alice Turner seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained.

Consent Agenda: Minutes and Interim Principals

1. BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the meeting minutes from March 6, 2025.
2. BE IT RESOLVED, the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby elects Leonard Epps, to the Board of Directors with a three year term ending June 30, 2028
3. BE IT RESOLVED that the AF Hartford Academy Board of Directors hereby approves the following individuals to serve as interim principal, as needed, for a period of time not to exceed sixteen weeks through September 30, 2025, based on the recommendations by Achievement First.

School	Interim Principal 1	Interim Principal 2
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Elementary School	Jenn Arce	DJ Vandrilla
Middle School	Jessica Alhasnawi	Ashlie Alleyne
High School	Jahki Manley	n/a

4. WHEREAS, the Achievement First Hartford Academy Board of Directors entered into a Cooperative Arrangement Agreement with Jumoke Academy in 2017 pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes section 10-66ee (the “Original Contract”), and

WHEREAS, before the Original Contract was scheduled to end on June 30, 2022, the parties agreed to extend the Original Contract for a one-year period ending June 30, 2023, and additional one-year periods ending June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that:

The Achievement First Hartford Academy Board of Directors agrees to extend the Original Contract for another one-year period ending on June 30, 2026.

#### **IV. Finance Committee Report**

AF Interim Chief Financial Officer, Omar Mayyasi, presented the Q3 financials and FY26 budget proposal.

##### **FY25 Financials**

Despite slightly lower-than-budgeted enrollment, AF Hartford is projecting a \$140,000 surplus for the year. Cost savings were achieved through approximately 16 open staff positions, representing about 11% of total headcount, which offset revenue reductions. Schools used some savings for contract and temporary staffing. ESSER funding and student meal reimbursements also contributed positively to the revenue outlook.

##### **FY26 Budget Proposal**

Dr. Mayyasi presented a balanced FY26 budget, noting that this was achieved despite flat state funding and no increase to either per-pupil or ECS allocations. The budget reflects several strategic assumptions. First, it reduces reliance on philanthropy compared to prior years. It also incorporates a 4% vacancy rate to more accurately reflect historical staffing patterns and provide flexibility in school-level planning. Additionally, for the first time, the costs of the KIPP Collaborative college and career program—totaling \$217,000—are included directly in the school’s operating budget. These expenses will continue to be fully funded through philanthropic support. The budget also includes increased investment in teacher certification initiatives, alongside projected cost increases in healthcare premiums and school facilities.

Mr. De La Paz inquired about the KIPP Collaborative budget line, clarifying that while the cost had always been allocated post-audit, this would be the first time it appeared explicitly in the school's operating budget.

## **V. Board Resolutions and Approvals**

Mr. Hurst, Sr. asked for a motion to approve the AF Hartford FY 26 budget. Francoise Deristel-Leger motioned. Victor De La Paz seconded. All in favor, none opposed or abstained.

## **VI. Enrollment Update**

Emma White, Managing Director of Student Recruitment and Enrollment, provided an update on AF Hartford's enrollment strategy, framed by the broader challenge of declining student population in the region. Over the past five years, the school-age population within a 10-mile radius of the school has decreased by approximately 8%, contributing to enrollment pressure across the city.

In response, the team has made targeted investments in both digital and community-based outreach. These efforts include a new partnership with a Hartford-based media agency to enhance local visibility, as well as the production of school-specific video content to share compelling stories from each campus. Ms. White also highlighted the school's participation in a major summer kickoff event at the local library, designed to engage families directly, and recent promotion on the television segment *Great Day Connecticut* to further boost awareness and interest. Ms. White noted small year-over-year gains in applications but acknowledged that enrollment would still likely decline, especially as smaller cohorts advance through grade levels.

Mr. Hurst Sr. observed the visibly smaller senior class this year and asked about competition factors. Ms. White cited facilities, sports, and marketing by other schools as common drivers. However, she also highlighted strong student retention gains this year, thanks to leadership efforts at the high school.

Board members suggested alumni engagement as a marketing tool, with specific stories shared about successful alumni, including full-ride scholars and international experiences. Ms. White and Michael Rabin, Chief Strategy Officer, shared that alumni storytelling would be a core focus at the upcoming AF Summit, and they welcomed support in connecting with graduates.

## **VII. Adjourn**

Board Chair Erwin Hurst, Sr. adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:07 PM, with thanks to all participants and a warm welcome to Leonard Epps as the newest board member.